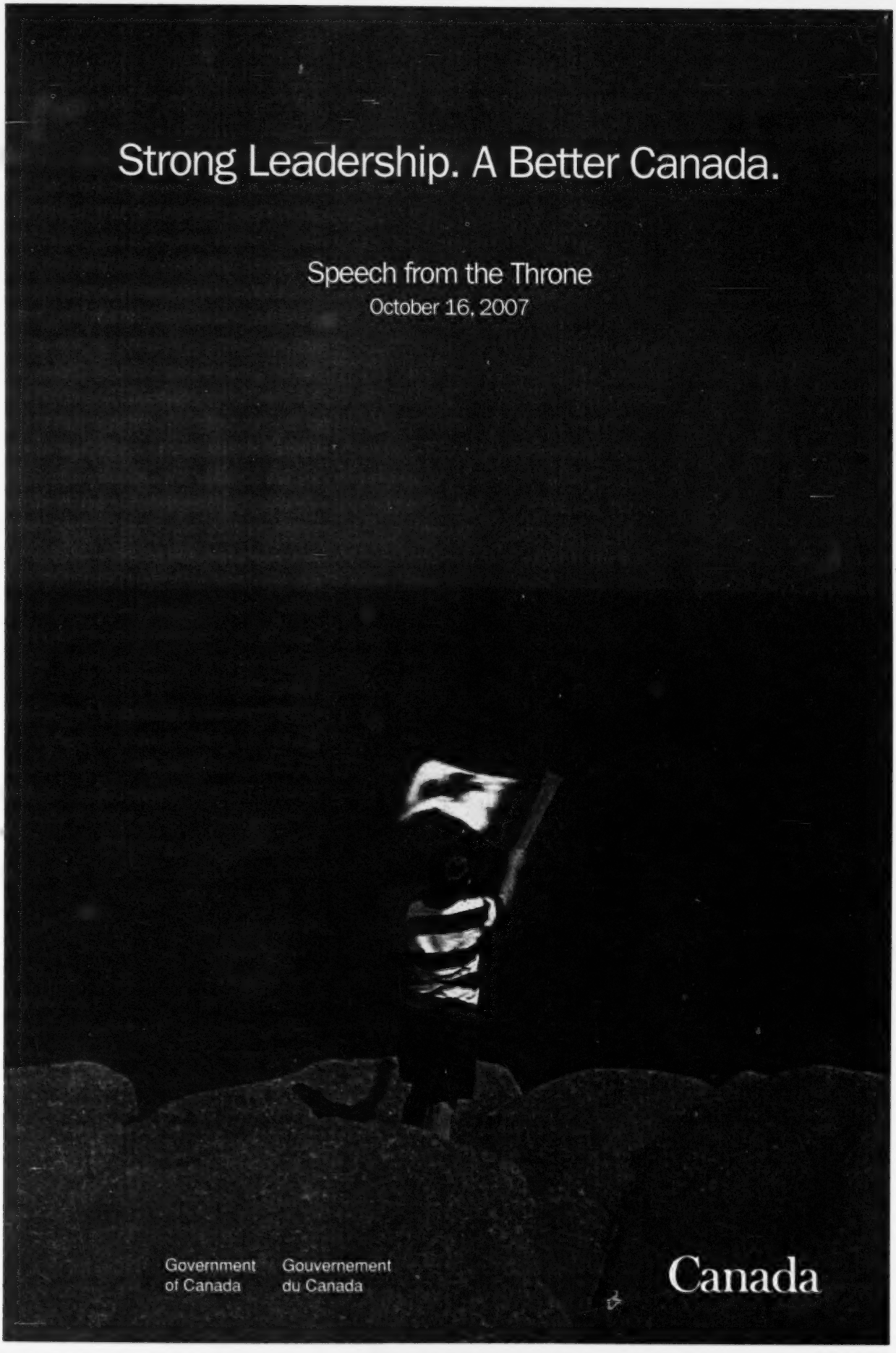
Strong Leadership. A Better Canada.

Speech from the Throne

October 16, 2007



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Honourable Senators,
Members of the House of Commons,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to address the first words in this chamber to the members of the Canadian Forces, some of whom are present here today. Their commitment and courage in the name of justice, equality and freedom—whose benefits are not accorded to all peoples in the world—are worthy of our utmost respect.

The Speech from the Throne is an important moment in our country's democratic life. Through the Speech from the Throne, the Government shares its vision with Canadians. And it is thus that we open the Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Parliament today.

Fifty years ago, on October 14, 1957, during her first visit to Canada as its Sovereign, and for the first time in Canadian history, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II opened the First Session of the Twenty-Third Parliament.

This room is filled with history, and we mark history again this year as we celebrate a number of anniversaries. I think, in particular, of the bicentenary of the *Abolition of the Slave Trade Act* in the British Empire. I also think of the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the *Citizenship Act* on January 1, 1947. And I think of the 40th anniversary of the Order of Canada, whose one hundredth investiture ceremony we will soon be celebrating at Rideau Hall.

And although Canada is a young country, its history is marked by our unwavering willingness—which I was touched to see all across Canada—to be and to continue to be a generous society. A society that is concerned about the well-being of others. A society that is protective of the spirit of this bountiful land, a deep respect learned from Aboriginal peoples. A society that is committed to finding solutions to today's challenges. A society that is open to creation and quick to innovate. A society that is filled with young people who have an unprecedented openness to the world.

Strong Leadership. A Better Canada.

Canada is the greatest country in the world, a nation of enormous potential built through the imagination and dedication of ordinary Canadians. Canadians who have worked hard to build a better life for their families. Canadians who have joined with their neighbours to create a society founded on peace and prosperity.

Canada is their legacy to us.

Canadians expect their government to help them build on this legacy. They want a government that sets clear goals and delivers concrete results. A government that is accountable. A government that puts Canadians and their families first.

Our Government has worked hard to meet these expectations. Canadians now have more money in their pockets because taxes have been cut. Families now have real choice in child care through the Universal Child Care Benefit. Canadians now have a government committed to helping them get the medical care they need more quickly. A government that is tackling crime and making neighbourhoods safer.

The results are clear: the economy is strong, the government is clean and the country is united.

Now is the time to continue building a better Canada. In the next session, our Government will focus on five clear priorities: strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world; building a stronger federation; providing effective economic leadership; continuing to tackle crime; and improving our environment.

Strengthening Canada's Sovereignty and Place in the World

Canada is built on a common heritage of values, which Canadians have fought and died to defend. It is a country that continues to attract newcomers seeking refuge and opportunity, who see Canada as a place where they can work hard, raise families and live in freedom. Our Government is resolved to uphold this heritage by protecting our sovereignty at home and living by our values abroad.

The Arctic is an essential part of Canada's history. One of our Fathers of Confederation, D'Arcy McGee, spoke of Canada as a northern nation, bounded by the blue rim of the ocean. Canadians see in our North an expression of our deepest aspirations: our sense of exploration, the beauty and the bounty of our land, and our limitless potential.

But the North needs new attention. New opportunities are emerging across the Arctic, and new challenges from other shores. Our Government will bring forward an integrated northern strategy focused on strengthening Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and improving

and devolving governance, so that northerners have greater control over their destinies.

To take advantage of the North's vast opportunities, northerners must be able to meet their basic needs. Our Government will work to continue to improve living conditions in the North for First Nations and Inuit through better housing.

Our Government will build a world-class arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of arctic issues, including environmental science and resource development. This station will be built by Canadians, in Canada's Arctic, and it will be there to serve the world.

As part of asserting sovereignty in the Arctic, our Government will complete comprehensive mapping of Canada's Arctic seabed. Never before has this part of Canada's ocean floor been fully mapped.

Defending our sovereignty in the North also demands that we maintain the capacity to act. New arctic patrol ships and expanded aerial surveillance will guard Canada's Far North and the Northwest Passage. As well, the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers will be expanded to better patrol our vast Arctic territory.

Ensuring our capacity to defend Canada's sovereignty is at the heart of the Government's efforts to rebuild the Canadian Forces. Canada's men and women in uniform risk their lives for their country, and deserve the equipment and training required for a first-class, modern military. Our Government will modernize Canada's military to provide effective surveillance and protection for all of our country, cooperate in the defence of North America, and meet our responsibilities abroad to the United Nations and our allies. Further, recognizing the important role that the Reserves

play in this modernization, our Government will work with the provinces and territories to bring forward a comprehensive plan to modernize reservist reinstatement policies.

At the same time as our Government rebuilds to meet our future needs, it will continue to improve support for our veterans who have contributed so much to defending Canada in the past.

Rebuilding our capabilities and standing up for our sovereignty have sent a clear message to the world: Canada is back as a credible player on the international stage. Our Government believes that focus and action, rather than rhetoric and posturing, are restoring our influence in global affairs. Guided by our shared values of democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law, our Government will continue Canada's international leadership through concrete actions that bring results.

A commitment to action means that Canada must make common cause with those fighting for the values we uphold. Our Government will immediately call upon Parliament to confer honorary citizenship on Aung San Suu Kyi. Her long struggle to bring freedom and democracy to the people of Burma has made her the embodiment of these ideals and an inspiration to all of us.

Nowhere is Canada making a difference more clearly than in Afghanistan. Canada has joined the United Nations-sanctioned mission in Afghanistan because it is noble and necessary. Canadians understand that development and security go hand in hand. Without security, there can be no humanitarian aid, no reconstruction and no democratic development. Progress will be slow, but our efforts are bearing fruit. There is no better measure of this progress than the four million Afghan boys and two million girls who can dream of a better future because they now go to school.

The Canadian Forces mission has been approved by Parliament until February 2009, and our Government has made clear to Canadians and our allies that any future military deployments must also be supported by a majority of parliamentarians. In the coming session, members will be asked to vote on the future of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. This decision should honour the dedication and sacrifice of Canada's development workers, diplomats and men and women in uniform. It should ensure that progress in Afghanistan is not lost and that our international commitments and reputation are upheld.

Our Government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009. Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty. This will not be completed by February 2009, but our Government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011, the end of the period covered by the Afghanistan Compact. Our Government has appointed an independent panel to advise Canadians on how best to proceed given these considerations.

In our own neighbourhood, the Americas, Canada is back playing an active role. The Canadian model of constitutional democracy and economic openness combined with social safety nets, equitable wealth creation and sharing across regions has much to offer those countries struggling to build a better future.

Canada's efforts in Haiti are a compelling example of how we can work with our neighbours to ensure security and development. Canadians understand that our country has a responsibility to help countries struggling to make a better life for their people—particularly in promoting democratic

governance in fragile states. In Haiti and elsewhere, our Government will bring greater focus and effectiveness to Canada's international assistance to ensure that Canadians' money is well spent.

The best hope for fostering development and our common security in the hemisphere and beyond is through bolstering international trade. Through renewed focus on trade and investment arrangements, Canada has already secured a deal with the European Free Trade Association, the first new agreement in more than half a decade. Our Government will keep advancing Canada's trade interests in the Americas and around the world to open up new markets for Canada's innovators.

Strengthening the Federation and our Democratic Institutions

Next year we mark important anniversaries spanning our country and its history. We will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Quebec City. Canada was born in French, reflected in the presence of francophones throughout Canada, and in Parliament's recognition that the Québécois form a nation within our united country. We will also celebrate the 250th anniversary of the establishment of Nova Scotia's representative assembly, which marks the birth of Canadian parliamentary democracy, and the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Crown Colony of British Columbia.

John A. Macdonald, George-Étienne Cartier and the other Fathers of Confederation brought many peoples and regions together to create a federation that has served Canadians well for 140 years. Our Government is committed to strengthening that union: it has concentrated on its national role by reinvesting in neglected federal responsibilities, such

as trade, defence, public safety and security. It has put fiscal relations with provinces and territories on a principled basis and increased the level of transfers to support quality health care and social services.

Our Government believes that the constitutional jurisdiction of each order of government should be respected. To this end, guided by our federalism of openness, our Government will introduce legislation to place formal limits on the use of the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. This legislation will allow provinces and territories to opt out with reasonable compensation if they offer compatible programs.

Our Government will also pursue the federal government's rightful leadership in strengthening Canada's economic union. Despite the globalization of markets, Canada still has a long way to go to establish free trade among our provinces. It is often harder to move goods and services across provincial boundaries than across our international borders. This hurts our competitive position but, more importantly, it is just not the way a country should work. Our Government will consider how to use the federal trade and commerce power to make our economic union work better for Canadians.

Canadians understand that the federation is only as strong as the democratic institutions that underpin it. Our Government believes that Canada is not well served by the Senate in its current form. To ensure that our institutions reflect our shared commitment to democracy, our Government will continue its agenda of democratic reform by reintroducing important pieces of legislation from the last session, including direct consultations with voters on the selection of Senators and limitations on their tenure. In addition, the integrity of our federal voting system will be

further strengthened through measures to confirm the visual identification of voters.

Our Government supports Canada's linguistic duality. It will renew its commitment to official languages in Canada by developing a strategy for the next phase of the Action Plan for Official Languages.

Our Government remains committed to improving the lives of Canada's Aboriginal people. The Government will reintroduce legislation to guarantee to people living on reserve the same protections other Canadians enjoy under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Our Government will also present legislation on specific claims, which will finally bring fairness and timely resolution to the claims process.

Our Government recently concluded a final settlement on Indian Residential Schools and will launch a commission for truth and reconciliation. The Prime Minister, on behalf of our Government, will use this occasion to make a statement of apology to close this sad chapter in our history.

Providing Effective Economic Leadership for a Prosperous Future

This is a time of economic uncertainty and volatility in the wider world. While the economic fundamentals of our country are strong, Canada is not immune from this turbulence. Canadians understand these challenges and want a government that is a competent and effective manager of the economy.

With *Advantage Canada*, our Government has laid out a sensible economic plan to secure better-paying jobs and solid growth for Canadians. The Minister of Finance will soon provide a Fall Economic and Fiscal Update, which will

outline the next steps in that plan to ensure that Canada has a modern infrastructure, an innovative and entrepreneurial business environment, and a tax system that rewards hard work—all based on a foundation of sound fiscal management.

As part of ensuring economic security for Canadians, our Government will bring forward a long-term plan of broad-based tax relief for individuals, businesses and families—including following through on its commitment to a further cut to the GST. To complement this, our Government will support Canadian researchers and innovators in developing new ideas and bringing them to the marketplace through Canada's Science and Technology Strategy. Our Government will improve the protection of cultural and intellectual property rights in Canada, including copyright reform. Our Government will also take measures to improve the governance and management of the Employment Insurance Account.

The bedrock of our workforce is middle-class Canadians and their families. These families worry about the rising costs of higher education and the expense of caring for elderly parents. They worry about affordable housing and the number of homeless people on our streets. Our Government is committed to helping Canadian families meet their needs. The Working Income Tax Benefit will help Canadians get back into the workforce, and the registered disability savings plan will help families care for children with severe disabilities. Our Government will continue to invest in our families and our future, and will help those seeking to break free from the cycles of homelessness and poverty.

Our Government will announce an infrastructure program, the Building Canada Plan, to support our long-term growth. By investing in our transport and trade hubs, including the Windsor–Detroit corridor and the Atlantic and Pacific

gateways, our Government will help rebuild our fundamentals for continued growth.

The result will be safer roads and bridges, shorter commutes, more competitive business, improved cultural infrastructure and a better quality of life for all Canadians.

Our Government will stand up for Canada's traditional industries. Key sectors including forestry, fisheries, manufacturing and tourism are facing challenges. Our Government has taken action to support workers as these industries adjust to global conditions and will continue to do so in the next session.

The agricultural sector will benefit from our Government's promotion of biofuels and the new Growing Forward agricultural framework. Our Government will recognize the views of farmers, as expressed in the recent plebiscite on barley, by enacting marketing choice. Together with our Government's strong support for Canada's supply-managed system, these approaches will deliver stable, predictable and bankable support for farm families.

Our mining and resource sectors present extraordinary opportunities across Canada, and our Government will help move forward by providing a single window for major project approvals. With these increased opportunities for employment, our Government will continue to foster partnerships that help Aboriginal people get the skills and training to take advantage of these job prospects in the North and across Canada.

Tackling Crime and Strengthening the Security of Canadians

Canada was founded on the principles of peace, order and good government. This is the birthright of all Canadians; yet Canadians feel less safe today and rightly worry about the security of their neighbourhoods and the country. There is no greater responsibility for a government than to protect this right to safety and security.

In the last session, our Government introduced important and timely legislation to tackle violent crime. Unfortunately much of this legislation did not pass. That is not good enough to maintain the confidence of Canadians. Our Government will immediately reintroduce these measures with a single, comprehensive Tackling Violent Crime bill to protect Canadians and their communities from violent criminals and predators. This will include measures on the age of protection, impaired driving, dangerous offenders and stricter bail and mandatory prison sentences for those who commit gun crimes. Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation.

Our Government will go further with a Safer Communities strategy to deal with the critical intersection of drug, youth and property crime. Our Government will strengthen the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* to ensure that young offenders who commit serious crimes are held accountable to victims and their communities. Our Government will introduce tough new laws to tackle property crime, including the serious problem of auto theft. New measures to address elder abuse and to curb identity theft will also be introduced. Our Government will implement the National Anti-Drug Strategy giving law enforcement agencies powers to take on those who produce and push drugs on our streets.

In addition to tougher laws, our Government will provide targeted support to communities and victims. It will help families and local communities in steering vulnerable youth away from a life of drugs and crime, and the Anti-Drug Strategy will help to treat those suffering from drug addiction. It will again ask Parliament to repeal the wasteful long-gun registry. Our Government will also ensure effective law enforcement—starting with resources to recruit 2,500 more officers to police our streets.

The concern of Canadians in protecting our communities extends naturally to protecting our country against threats to our national security: those who would attack the peaceful pluralism of our society through acts of terrorism. Canada has experienced the tragedy of terrorism before. The report from the public inquiry into the Air India bombing will be an important contribution to safeguarding the lives of Canadians in the future.

Our Government will address Canadians directly on the challenge of protecting our free and open society with a statement on national security. The Government will introduce legislation to make sure that Canada has the tools it needs to stop those who would threaten our cities, communities and families, including measures to strengthen the *Anti-Terrorism Act* and to respond to the Supreme Court decision on security certificates.

Improving the Environment and Health of Canadians

Threats to our environment are a clear and present danger that now confronts governments around the world. This is nowhere more evident than in the growing challenge of climate change.

Our Government believes that action is needed now to ensure our quality of life, particularly for those most vulnerable to health threats from the environment—our children and seniors.

Climate change is a global issue and requires a global solution. Our Government believes strongly that an effective global approach to greenhouse gas emissions must have binding targets that apply to all major emitters, including Canada. Canada has already engaged the international community at APEC, the G8 and the United Nations and will continue to press for a new international agreement that cuts global emissions in half by 2050.

As we pursue a global consensus, Canada is acting even more aggressively at home. Our Government will implement our national strategy to reduce Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions 60 to 70 percent by 2050. There will be a 20 percent reduction by 2020. Our Government will bring forward the elements from Canada's Clean Air Act, which had all-party consensus, for parliamentary consideration.

This strategy will institute binding national regulations on greenhouse gas emissions across all major industrial sectors—with requirements for emissions reductions starting this year. Our Government will also bring forward the first-ever national air pollution regulations. In so doing, our Government will put Canada at the forefront of clean technologies to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Our Government will also establish a carbon emissions trading market that will give business the incentive to run cleaner, greener operations.

At the end of 2005, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions were 33 percent above the Kyoto commitment. It is now widely understood that, because of inaction on greenhouse gases over the last decade, Canada's emissions cannot be

brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008, just 77 days from now.

The world is moving on to address climate change and the environment, and Canada intends to help lead the effort at home and abroad.

Beyond regulating greenhouse gases and air pollution, our Government has also acted to protect sensitive areas, including a massive expansion of Nahanni National Park, and preserving the Great Bear Rainforest, Point Pleasant Park and Stanley Park. Through our new infrastructure plan, our Government will promote a cleaner environment by investing in public transport and water treatment, and by cleaning up contaminated sites. A new water strategy will be implemented to help clean up our major lakes and oceans and to improve access to safe drinking water for First Nations.

In the past, environmental legislation and regulation have had little impact because they have lacked an effective enforcement regime. In the coming session, our Government will bolster the protection of our water and land through tougher environmental enforcement that will make polluters accountable.

Environmental protection is not just about protecting nature. It is about the health of Canadians. Recent events have called into question the safety of basic products such as food for our families and toys for our children.

Our Government shares the concern of parents about the safety of consumer products and food. Canadians should expect the same standards of quality from imported goods as they do from products made at home. The Government will introduce measures on food and product safety to

ensure that families have confidence in the quality and safety of what they buy.

Conclusion: The North Star

Canadians can be proud of their country and its achievements. Working together we have built a nation that is prosperous and safe; a land where merit trumps privilege; a place where people from around the world live in harmony; a federation that is united at home and respected abroad.

Like the North Star, Canada has been a guide to other nations; through difficult times, Canada has shone as an example of what a people joined in common purpose can achieve. Yet Canada's greatest strength lies in its energy and determination to move forward and build a better future.

Our Government is committed to strong leadership to realize that future. A Canada proud of its leadership in the world and confident in its economic future. A Canada built on a strong federation and a robust democracy. A Canada that is safe for our families and healthy for our children.

Canadians, standing on a proud history, look onto a horizon as limitless as the promise of our country. It is up to us to build on the legacy we have inherited, to seize the opportunities of the future, and to bring about an even better Canada for our children.

May your deliberations be guided by Divine Providence, may your wisdom and patriotism enlarge the prosperity of the country and promote in every way the well-being of its people.